

THE LOST WORLD

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cision. "We can't afford to take chances in a country like this. Two-hour spells in the future, for each of us."

"Then I'll just finish my pipe in starting the first one," said Professor Summerlee; and from that time onward we never trusted ourselves again without a watchman.

IN the morning it was not long before we discovered the source of the hideous uproar which had aroused us in the night. The iguanodon glade was the scene of a horrible butchery. From the pools of blood and the enormous lumps of flesh scattered in every direction over the green sward, we imagined at first that a number of animals had been killed; but on examining the remains more closely we discovered that all this carnage came from one of these unwieldy monsters, which had been literally torn to pieces by some creature not larger, perhaps, but far more ferocious than itself.

Our two professors sat in absorbed argument, examining piece after piece, which showed the marks of savage teeth and of enormous claws.

"Our judgment must still be in abeyance," said Professor Challenger, with a huge slab of whitish-colored flesh across his knee. "The indications would be consistent with the presence of a saber-toothed tiger, such as are still found among the breccia of our caverns; but the creature actually seen was undoubtedly of a larger and more reptilian character. Personally I should pronounce for *Allosaurus*."

"Or *Megalosaurus*," said Summerlee.

"Exactly. Anyone of the larger carnivorous dinosaurs would meet the case. Among them are to be found all the most terrible types of animal life that have ever cursed the earth or blessed a museum." He laughed sonorously at his own conceit; for, though he had little sense of humor, the crudest pleasantry from his own lips moved him always to roars of appreciation.

"The less noise the better," said Lord Roxton curtly. "We don't know who or what may be near us. If this fellow comes back for his breakfast and catches us here, we won't have much to laugh at. By the way, what is this mark upon the iguanodon's hide?"

ON the dull, scaly, slate-colored skin, somewhere above the shoulder, there was a singular black circle of some substance which looked like asphalt. None of us could suggest what it meant; though Summerlee was of the opinion that he had seen something similar upon one of the youngsters two days before. Challenger said nothing, but looked pompous and puffy, as if he could if he would; so that finally Lord Roxton asked his opinion direct.

"If your Lordship will graciously permit me to open my mouth, I shall be happy to express my sentiments," said he with elaborate sarcasm. "I am not in the habit of being taken to task in the fashion which seems to be customary with your Lordship. I was not aware that it was necessary to ask your permission before smiling at a harmless pleasantry."

It was not until he had received his apology that our touchy friend would suffer himself to be appeased. When at last his ruffled feelings were at rest, he addressed us at some length from his seat upon a fallen tree, speaking, as his habit was, as if he were imparting most precious information to a class of a thousand.

"With regard to the marking," said he, "I am inclined to agree with my friend and colleague Professor Summerlee that the stains are from asphalt. As this plateau is in its very nature highly volcanic, and as asphalt is a substance which one associates with Plutonic forces, I cannot doubt that it exists in the free liquid state, and that the creatures may have come in contact with it. A much more important problem is the question as to the existence of the carnivorous monster which has left its traces in this glade. We know roughly that this plateau is not larger than an average English county. Within this confined space a certain number of creatures, mostly types which have passed away in the world below, have lived together for innumerable years. Now it is very clear to me that in so long a period one would have expected that the carnivorous creatures, multiplying unchecked, would have exhausted their food supply and have been compelled either to modify their flesh-eating habits or to die of hunger. This we see has not been so. We can only imagine, therefore, that the balance of Nature is preserved by some check which limits the numbers of these ferocious creatures. One of the many interesting problems, therefore, which await

our solution is to discover what that check may be, and how it operates. I venture to trust that we may have some future opportunity for the closer study of the carnivorous dinosaurs."

"And I venture to trust we may not," I observed.

The professor only raised his great eyebrows, as the schoolmaster meets the irrelevant observation of the naughty boy. "Perhaps Professor Summerlee may have an observation to make," he said, and the two savants ascended together into some rarefied scientific atmosphere where the possibilities of a modification of the birth rate were weighed against the decline of the food supply as a check in the struggle for existence.

That morning we mapped out a small portion of the plateau, avoiding the swamp of the pterodactyls and keeping to the east of our brook instead of to the west. In that direction the country was still thickly wooded, with so much undergrowth that our progress was very slow.

IHAVE dwelt up to now upon the terrors of Maple White Land; but there was another side to the subject, for all that morning we wandered among lovely flowers,—mostly, as I observed, white or yellow in color, these being, as our professors explained, the primitive flower shades. In many places the ground was absolutely covered with them, and as we walked ankle deep on that wonderful yielding carpet, the scent was almost intoxicating in its sweetness and intensity. The homely English bee buzzed everywhere around us. Many of the trees under which we passed had their branches bowed down with fruit, some of which were familiar sorts, while other varieties were new. By observing which of them were pecked by the birds, we avoided all danger of poison, and added a delicious variety to our food reserve.

In the jungle which we traversed were numerous hard-trodden paths made by the wild beasts, and in the more marshy places we saw a profusion of strange footmarks, including many of these iguanodons. Once in a grove we observed several of these great creatures grazing, and Lord Roxton, with his glass, was able to report that they also were spotted with asphalt, though in a different place than the one we had examined in the morning. What this phenomenon meant we could not imagine. We saw many small animals, such as porcupines, a scaly anteater, and a wild pig, piebald in color and with long curved tusks.

Once, through a break in the trees, we saw a clear shoulder of green hill some distance away, and across this a large, dun-colored animal was traveling at a considerable pace. It passed so swiftly that we were unable to say what it was; but, if it were a deer, as was claimed by Lord Roxton, it must have been as large as those monstrous Irish elk which are still dug up from time to time in the bogs of my native land.

Ever since the mysterious visit which had been paid to our camp, we always returned to it with somegivings. However, on this occasion we found everything in order.

THAT evening we had a grand discussion upon our present situation and future plans, which I must describe at some length, as it led to a new departure by which we were enabled to gain a more complete knowledge of Maple White Land than might have come in many weeks of exploring. It was Summerlee who opened the debate. All day he had been querulous in manner, and now some remark of Lord Roxton's as to what we should do on the morrow brought all his bitterness to a head.

"What we ought to be doing today, tomorrow, and all the time," said he, "is finding some way out of the trap into which we have fallen. You are all turning your brains toward getting into this country. I say that we should be scheming how to get out of it."

"I am surprised, Sir," boomed Challenger, stroking his majestic beard, "that any man of science should commit himself to so ignoble a sentiment. You are in a land which offers such an inducement to the ambitious naturalist as none ever has since the world began, and you suggest leaving it before we have acquired more than the most superficial knowledge of it or of its contents. I expected better things of you, Professor Summerlee."

"You must remember," said Summerlee sourly, "that I have a large class in London who are at present at the mercy of an extremely inefficient *locum tenens*. This makes my situation different to yours, Professor Challenger; since, so far as I know, you